

A) Amendments to the claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): An implant plate assembly for stabilization of the spine, comprising:

a first screw receiving socket element at a distal end of said assembly and configured with a screw shank passage and a screw head seat for attachment to a vertebra with the aid of a bone fixation screw;

an elongate arm extending proximally from said first socket element and having an elongate through slot therealong with upper and lower edges;

a second screw receiving socket element also configured with a screw shank passage and a screw head seat on an upper side thereof, and slidably received over said arm with its passage aligned over said slot for receiving the shank of a fixation screw therethrough for attachment to a vertebra;

said second socket element and said slot configured and dimensioned whereby portions of a screw head of a fixation screw seated in said second socket element protrude through said second socket element passage and engage upper edges of said slot for clamping said second socket element to said arm when said screw is fully secured in a vertebra.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The implant plate assembly of claim 1, edges of said slot including a series of adjacent screw head seat depressions for selectively seating portions of the head of a bone fixation screw.

Claim 3 (previously presented): The implant plate assembly of claim 1, a cap buttress nut threadably received in said second socket element over said screw head for engaging and covering said screw head.

Claim 4 (previously presented): The implant plate assembly of claim 3, said nut having bottom protuberances for engaging said screw head as a lock.

Claim 5 (currently amended): An implant for stabilization of the spine, comprising:

- an elongate implant plate assembly having distal and proximal ends configured for respective attachment to first and second spaced vertebra with the aid of bone fixation screws;
- said plate assembly including first and second screw receiving elements slidably received with respect to each other for adjustably changing the distance between said elements;
- a lock assembly for selectively locking said first and second elements from further relative movement therebetween; and
- said first and second screw receiving elements each having a screw head socket bowl on upper sides thereof for receiving the head of a bone fixation screw with mating intimacy and a passage in the bottom of each bowl for passage of the shank of a bone fixation screw;
- said second screw receiving element slidable along an arm portion of said plate assembly, said lock assembly including a slot with upper and lower edges in said arm portion and underlying said passage for said second bowl for receiving the shank of a fixation screw therethrough and therealong at desired positions, and said passage for said second bowl and said slot configured and dimensioned whereby portions of the head of a fixation screw received in said second bowl

protrude through said passage for said second bowl to engage upper edges of said slot and thereby clamp said second screw receiving element to said plate assembly when said fixation screw is fully secured to a vertebra.

Claim 6 (previously presented): The implant of claim 5, including an open ended guide wire capture slot in said distal end which communicates with said first bowl passage.

Claim 7 (previously presented): The implant of claim 5, including locking caps configured and dimensioned for closing off said bowls with bone fixation screw heads seated in said bowls.

Claim 8 (previously presented): The implant of claim 7, said locking caps threadably received in said bowls and having bottom protuberances for engaging said screw heads as a lock.

Claim 9 (previously presented): The implant of claim 5, wherein said distal end has a leading transverse edge which is tapered.

Claim 10 (previously presented) The implant of claim 5, wherein said plate assembly is longitudinally curved to mate a specific lordotic curve.

Claim 11 (previously presented): The implant of claim 5, wherein said slot is dimensioned and contoured for seating portions of the head of a bone fixation screw protruding from said second bowl.

Claim 12 (previously presented): The implant of claim 11, edges of said slot including an aligned series of adjacent screw head seat depressions for selectively seating portions of the head of a bone fixation screw at different positions along said slot.

Claims 13 - 25 (canceled)

Claims 26 - 38 (withdrawn)